

AN ALTERNATIVE ROAD TO MODERNITY

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1. Modernization and modernity.

Political theory does not seem to have quite assimilated the fact that there are not only different roads, but also different outcomes in the path to what used to be called "modernization", but tends to be called today "modernity". "Political theory" is of course far from a well-identified *corpus* of theoretical knowledge, and this opening statement could be falsified but a host of counter-examples. Nevertheless, I would contend that scholars tend still to work under the notion that, notwithstanding national variations and local setbacks, societies modernize through the incorporation modern industry, scientific and technological knowledge, the organization of a bureaucratized state and the substitution of contractual links for those based on tradition or charisma - all, in short, that falls into Max Weber called "rationalization". The word "modernization", which

pervaded the social sciences until the sixties, expressed the belief that all societies were going through the same processes (political scientists talked about ("nation building" and "political development")), and that there was something pathological and wrong in those who did not quite managed it. "Modernity", a much more general term, has now replaced modernization. It does not carry the evolutionist and systemic connotations of the latter, but still conveys the meaning that all societies, today, share a common destiny and condition, described as state of uncertainty, instability and disenchantment in a world where "all that is solid melts into air"¹.

I would contend that there is at least a second central ingredient in the notion of "modernity" besides the transient nature of its institutions, which is the generalized use of modern technologies. The creation of institutions able to produce scientific knowledge and technological products, and the spreading of this competence through society, is certainly a privilege of those societies that were able to rationalize in the broader, Weberian sense of the term. However, the use of highly technological consumer goods such as video-recorders and automobiles; the adoption of some types of modern industry based on sophisticated equipment with a high content of "embodied" knowledge, manned by an unskilled or deskilled labor force; the use modern and sophisticated weapon systems; and the adoption of administrative structures able to handle with a minimum of efficiency the modern equipments of mass communication, information gathering, economic production and political control seem to be completely generalized in the world of today.

There is, at last, a set of normative questions that are central to the concept of modernity. Modern societies are supposed to be democratic, equitable, economically efficient, and to provide their citizens with economic stability, personal security, education and welfare. These values inform, among other things, the social scientists' enquiries about how these societies were formed, and whether there is something in their history that could help to

¹ The expression is taken from Marx's *Communist Manifesto*. See Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air - The Experience of Modernity*. New York, Simon and Schuster, 1982.

explain why they succeed or not in achieving these values, or why they detract from them².

2. Modernity and the State

The development of the state, out of the ashes of medieval order, is a central element in the interpretation of the way modern societies, and modern democracies, were formed³. We have learned that, in Europe, the modern state emerged as the product of a protracted conflict between raising absolutist powers, in alliance with merchant and urban sectors, against the rural nobility and the Catholic Church, which represented the fundamental elements of the feudal order. One consequence of this process was the creation of ever-larger political units, with the waning of the power both from the old rural lords and from the more recent city-states. Power centralization, however, did not come unchecked. The emerging absolutist states had to fight not only against the remnants of the traditional order, but also against the representatives of the new one, the urban bourgeoisie, new and independent religious movements, an emerging intelligentsia, an easily mobilized displaced population in the large cities and the first manifestations of an organized working class -- all that the French once lumped together as the "troisième état", and which is often called today the "civil society".

The central theoretical point I wish to make is that, in Europe, the contractual component, which was such a basic element in the political organization of medieval society, did not disappear with the emergence of the absolutist state, but was replaced by other types of contractual arrangements, not only with the raising modern sectors in the cities, but also with the old professional guilds and, often, with a transformed and "modernized" landed aristocracy. This is certainly what Max Weber had in mind with his conceptualization of modern forms of political domination as "rational-legal". The "rational" component of the

² These normative questions, incidentally, are what provide some kind of thematic unification to the modern social sciences, and place a limit to the relativistic notion that each society is unique (which of course they are) and therefore cannot be examined from a stable point of view and compared among themselves.

³ Björn Wittrock, "Rise and Development of Modern State: Democracy in Context", forthcoming.

new order was the creation of government bureaucracies which disregarded traditional procedures and organizational arrangements in the benefit of those which maximized efficiency in goal attainment (what, still in Weberian terms, could be called "substantive rationality"); the "legal" component, however, did not refer, as it sometimes understood, to empirical or scientific laws, but to the legal order which gave legitimacy to political domination - in other words, contract.

The notion, put forward by Weber, that modern bureaucracies are the most efficient form of social organization ever to exist, helped to hide the inherent tensions between its two central components, rationality and legality, or contract. It is obvious today that bureaucracies in the Weberian sense are particularly ill suited to perform the complex tasks involved in the running of a modern and complex welfare state. As the tasks of the modern bureaucrat get more complex, formalism and written procedures are replaced by "expert" or professional competence, and the explicit rules that once allowed for political control of public bureaucracies cease to exist. Bureaucrats, as Weber predicted, tend to assume control of their work and subtract them from external oversight, and the problems of social and political control of public bureaucracies are not handled as easily by parliaments and political parties as it was usually thought to be possible⁴.

Once we perceive that the link between rationality and legality is historical, rather than conceptual or empirically necessary, several new questions open up. How different societies arrived at their current stage of "modernity"? What difference does it make if this process had or not a strong component of "legality", or contract? How do the tensions between rationality and contract (or, in Weberian terms, between substantive and formal rationality) occur in different societies, and what are their consequences for the present and the future?

⁴ It is curious how the Weberian notion of bureaucracy was influenced, in its conception, by the industrial system of mass production, in which all tasks are clearly defined in advance, leaving very little space for the workers to control their work through their professional skills and the strength of their professional guilds and unions. The prediction that the Ford model of mass production would prevail in all forms of modern organization did not come through in the civil service, and there are signs that it may also be in crisis in the industrial sector itself. Cf. Michael J. Piore and Charles F. Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide -- Possibilities for Prosperity*. New York, Basic Books, 1984.

3. Feudalism, patrimonialism and the modern state.

The contractual nature of the feudal order seems to be a powerful explanation for the correlation that exists between past feudal experiences and contemporary modern capitalist and democratic societies. Machiavelli is known for the deep difference he said to exist between two main forms of political organization of states, "the Prince and his barons" and "the Prince and his subjects", that is, feudal and patrimonial arrangements. With the growth of the cities and the development of the crafts in feudal societies, contractualism was also adopted to regulate the relations between these new social actors and the Prince, or the Church. This was certainly one important road to modernization, but what happened with societies that did not have a feudal past? Have they failed in the constitution of their nation-states? Have they failed to modernize? Or, if they succeeded, in what sense did they do it? Did they have somehow to incorporate in their societies the contractual component that did not exist in their historical heritage?

From the perspective of five centuries ago, the old patrimonial empires were certainly much more "modern" and developed than the feudal societies which existed throughout Western Europe. From China to Turkey and the Iberian countries, they had the largest cities, the strongest armies, the most sophisticated scholars, the best fleets, the more advanced technologies and the most complex administrative organizations. The expression "patrimonial bureaucracy" was used by Weber to characterize these old administrative systems, but this expression seems to refer to at least two different realities. In one sense, patrimonial bureaucracies were "traditional" organizations in which work was seldom professionalized, and tended to be carried on by honorarios as liturgical services to the Prince. These were shallow, almost intermittent organizations, in which no development of differentiated professional skills, competence or ethic was possible among civil servants. In another sense, however, patrimonial bureaucracies were seen as quite professionalized institutions, characterized, however, by the private appropriation of public posts by their holders, and their eventual selling or transmission along hereditary lines. The blurring of dividing lines between the public and the private sector was not limited to traditional administrative tasks (tax collection, administration of justice, military service), but included the whole economic sector, from trading to mining and industries. This type of arrangement was certainly not incompatible with the setting

up of huge bureaucracies and of extremely detailed regulations for their work (as witnessed, for instance, by the old Spanish and Portuguese "ordenações", or codes) and the establishment of elaborated systems of surveillance of their work by the Crown. It is by no means clear that these patrimonial bureaucracies of the past were actually less efficient than the rational-legal administrations that emerged in Europe in the 19th century. The expression "neopatrimonialism" can be used to describe modern versions of the latter type of patrimonial administration.

It is also true, however, that the old patrimonial empires did not quit resist the historical onslaught the emerging European nations, endowed with two fundamental components of modernism, capitalism and empirical knowledge. They were not, however, destroyed or forced to adopt the Western European patterns of social, political and economic organization. The old patrimonial empires, or their inheritors - China, Russia, the Arab countries, Latin America - carried on in their own ways. They are certainly part of the modern world today; but, in many ways, they are probably as different from the Western European type states now as they have ever been in the past.

4. Patrimonialism and state dominance.

In the following, we shall spell out in some detail a few central characteristics of state formation in Brazil, and try to see how they relate to the country's current predicaments and dilemmas. The main reason for this choice is, of course, the author's familiarity with the subject⁵; but Brazil could also be taken as an example of the broader phenomenon under discussion, the alternative road to modernity.

⁵ No effort will be made, in the following, to cover the expanding literature related with the subject. For the authors' previous texts, see S. Schwartzman, "Twenty Years of Representative Democracy in Brazil", in H. Alker, K. Deutsch and A. H. Stoetzel, *Mathematical Approaches to Politics*. Amsterdam, Elsevier Scientific Publishing Co., 137-164, 1973; "Regional Contrasts Within a Continental-Scale Nation: Brazil", in S. N. Eisenstadt and S. Rokkan, *Building States and Nations*, Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, vol. II, 209-232, 1973; *São Paulo e o Estado Nacional*, Sao Paulo, Difel, 1975; "Back to Weber: Corporatism and Patrimonialism in the Seventies", in James M. Malloy (ed), *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976; "The Process of Spatial Dislocation and Social Identity Building: Brazil" (with Elisa P. Reis), *International Social Sciences Journal*, 30, 1, 1978; *Bases*

If modern nations have been formed through the interplay between political power and society, Brazil is a clear case in which society seems to have been almost nonexistent except as a state creation. The early strength of the Portuguese crown, given its success as a mercantilist power and the absence of a feudal nobility, seems to be related by the country's resistance to the penetration of religious reform and the whole set of institutions and ideas related with early capitalism. The nature of the Portuguese society at the time of the discoveries, and the type of colonial administration they organized in Brazil, has led to the notion that this was a clear case of a patrimonial bureaucracy being implanted on a new territory, leading to a pattern of colonization which differed sharply from the kind of settlements that the British were carrying on at the North. This pattern was consolidated even further when, in 1808, the whole Portuguese court moved to Rio de Janeiro under the protection of the English fleet, fleeing from the Napoleonic troops. The Portuguese court's ability to reach and control the whole extension of its colony was, of course, quite limited; but the principle of political and administrative centralization was established from the onset, and continued when, after 1822, the Portuguese royal family continued to hold the crown of an independent Brazilian empire.

This is the historical background which justifies the thesis that Brazil inherited from its colonial past a political system which does not operate as a "representative" or an "agent" of specific classes or groups, but which has a logic of its own, which can only be properly understood if we take into account the way the Brazilian state was formed. This thesis is difficult to understand from a traditional Marxist or economicist perspective which tries to explain everything that happens in a society in terms of its class cleavages; but is not really surprising when considered from a Weberian point of view, which stresses the historical differentiation and complex interplays between classes, political domination and systems of social privilege and status in any given society⁶. The Weberian approach

do Autoritarismo Brasileiro, Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia, Ed. Campus / Ed. Universidade de Brasilia, 1983 (3rd. edition, Ed. Campus, 1987).

⁶ Current approaches to the analysis of political systems, even if not confessedly Weberian, tend to share at least two elements. First, the State reappears as a social entity on its own right, rather than as a simple function of the interplay of interest groups. It follows that, second, States have to be understood through their history, the way they were formed, rather than just in terms of the functions they perform today.

help us to understand how the Brazilian state developed a strong *neopatrimonial* component, which resulted from a pattern of political dominance generated in a process of modernization characterized by a heavy colonial administration and a weak and loosely articulated "civil society" (social classes, religious, ethnic and linguist movements, nobility, and so forth). Brazil never had a nobility worth of this designation, the Catholic Church has been almost always submissive to the civilian authorities, the rich have always depended on the favors of the government, and the poor, of its eventual magnanimity. The point is not that, in Brazil, the state has been everything, and society, nothing. What is important is to understand the patterns of interplay between state and society, which has been almost always characterized by a heavy, powerful but usually inefficient and incompetent bureaucracy, and a weak, scared, and often rebellious and treacherous civil society.

5. Whither society?

Most of the debate around these ideas hinge around the question of whether, in fact, society was so weak and passive regarding the State as it is asserted. Which kind of society, after all, could have been formed in such a context?

In Spanish America, the presence of large native populations organized around agricultural activities led to a kind of colonial experience, the "encomienda" system, which Brazil never knew. Brazilian Indians were usually enslaved or, more often than not, decimated, and the Jesuits' attempts to organize them into stable agricultural settlement were violently suppressed by the Portuguese. The Church's opposition to Indian enslavement, in any case, is one of the explanations for the importation of African

Resistance to look at States as realities in their own right came not only from conventional Marxism, but also from mainstream academic political science. See, on the latter, S. Schwartzman, "Quem tem medo do Estado?", in Bolivar Lamounier, editor, *A Ciência Política nos Anos 80*, Brasília, Editora da Universidade de Brasília. 1984. See also Peter B. Evans, ed, *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge University Press, 1985.

slaves (the other explanation, difficult to substantiate, is that the Brazilian Indians did not adjust to enslavement as well as the Africans, for cultural or psychological reasons)⁷.

Portuguese settlers would only come to Brazil to make fortunes, or because they were forced to it. Colonial history is told through a succession of economic cycles - brazil wood, sugar, gold - which attracted adventurers to organize production and exports, bureaucrats to tax them, and military people to defend the colony against the British and French pirates, or the encroachment of the Spanish empire. Other newcomers included exiled criminals of all kinds, Jews fleeing from the Inquisition, sailors stranded in the beaches. The newcomers were mostly men, who mingled with Indian and African women and generated a large number of socially misplaced people who spent their lives hanging around the administrative centers or the large rural settlements.

As one economic cycle gave way to the next, they left behind decaying elites that had no choice but to withdraw into some form of economic self-sufficiency, or to develop new products for an internal market that started slowly to grow. Brazilian rural oligarchies are mostly that - the survivals of closed cycles of economy expansion, who, more often than not, were able to keep political and family ties with the political authorities in the cities, and use this access as a resource that compensated for their economic decadence. Adaptation to decadence and isolation, rather than the continuous link to the dynamics of international markets, is what explains some of the main features of Brazilian society since the colonial times⁸.

On time, these decadent and isolated segments came to think of themselves as a kind of Brazilian, or "criollo" elite (to use the Spanish expression), and to oppose the Portuguese "foreigners" in different ways. Cleavages between "Brazilian" and "Portuguese" parties

⁷ For an overview, see James Lang, *Portuguese Brazil: The King's Plantation*, New York, Academic Press, 1979.

⁸ Roberto Martins and Amílcar Martins Filho, "Slavery in a Nonexport Economy - Nineteenth Century Minas Gerais Revisited", *Hispanic American Historical Review* 63, 3, 537-568; Robert W. Slenes, Warren E. Dean, Stanley L. Engerman, and Eugene D. Genovese, "Comments on 'Slavery in a nonexport economy'", *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 63, 3, 1983, 569-590; and Roberto Martins and Amílcar Martins Filho, "Slavery in a Nonexport Economy: a Reply", *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 64, 1, 135-146.

existed throughout the 19th century, and were exacerbated by the Brazilian crown's obvious links with Portugal⁹. These cleavages turned later into a pattern of opposition between central and peripheral elites, which led sometimes to regional revolts and outbursts of private power in the provinces, but normally ended with the assertion of the central authorities. To send their sons to study law in Lisbon or in São Paulo, to enter national politics, to be accepted in the court in Rio de Janeiro, to become a member of the national political elite, this was the highest aspiration a local Brazilian landlord would usually have. In contrast with the Spanish empire, which broke down in dozens of independent states run by local "caudillos", Brazil remained united by a complex and fairly homogeneous political elite which preempted with competence the space left open by the Portuguese Crown¹⁰.

6. Regional cleavages and differentiation.

This pattern of a "strong state, weak society", although correct in general terms, has to be examined in terms of its regional and spatial implications¹¹. It is a fairly good characterization of the system of power sharing that had developed between the country's capital, Rio de Janeiro, and the decadent elites of the Northeast, Bahia and Minas Gerais.

⁹ Pedro I, who proclaimed Brazilian independence and became the country's first Emperor in 1822, was later to become the king of Portugal under the name of Pedro IV. He was succeeded in Brazil by his son, Pedro II.

¹⁰ J. M. Carvalho, "Political Elites and State Building: The Case of Nineteenth Century Brazil", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 24, July, 1982, 378-399.

¹¹ It is curious how sociologists and political scientists have resisted the inclusion of considerations of space and region in their analyses, and usually talk about nation-states as spatially homogeneous entities. Antony Giddens has recently called attention to this point, stressing that "nation-states, as the term suggests, are largely constituted politically, and they have territorial formations, gaining their identity not only by what goes on within them but with their involvement in a nation-state system. (...) Sociologists will surely have to become more sensitive to geopolitical influences affecting modes of social organization and social change in which they are interested". A. Giddens, *Social Theory and Modern Sociology*, Stanford University Press, 1987, pp. 35-36.

It excludes, however, two very dynamic and influential regions in the country's history, Rio Grande do Sul and São Paulo.

Rio Grande do Sul is the closest Brazil ever had of a Spanish American type of "caudillo" state. In part, this is due to the historical proximity with the Spanish empire, and more particularly to the "pampa" culture that developed around the Rio de la Plata. More to the point, however, is that it was only in this region that the Spanish and the Portuguese empires in America actually met, and the Rio Grande region became a kind of frontier garrison, raged by an almost continuous state of warfare carried on by cattlemen in horseback. Once the conflicts with Argentina and Uruguay were settled, the "gaucho" fighters took their weapons against the Brazilian authorities in Rio de Janeiro. In the 1870's they furnished probably the largest number of soldiers to the war with Paraguay, and after that period continued to supply the Brazilian army with the largest number of officers. For a son of a "gaucho", a military career was an option as good as any other, and the Rio Grande leadership moved quite easily between military assignments in the national army, positions in the well-organized state militia, and positions of prestige and authority in the state administration. In the early 1900's frontier and townspeople in Rio Grande do Sul clashed one of the bloodiest and longest civil wars in Brazilian history. When they finally settled, they moved in earnest to the national scenario with Getúlio Vargas, president and dictator between 1930 and 1945 and from 1950 to 1954, and a host of generals-politicians and political operators who followed him.

Rio Grande do Sul is also a region of Portuguese immigrants from the Azores islands and Italian and German colonies established at the turn of the century. Because of this type of migration and the patterns of land tenure they established, based on small properties manned by families and supported by cooperative networks, Rio Grande can boast today one of the highest levels of income, education and social equity in the country. The immigrants and their descendants, however, remained isolated from the state's caudillo politics. At the end, instead of becoming a counterweight for the centralizing and often authoritarian tendencies of the political center in Rio de Janeiro, the caudillo elite in Rio Grande contributed in fact to its reinforcement.

The old province, now state of São Paulo, is the most striking and significant deviation of the national pattern. It started, in the 16th century, as a "republic of bandits", too far away

from the Portuguese administration in Salvador to be bothered by it, and developed to become the country's economic and demographic center of today. Brazilian history can be told in large part as a tale of São Paulo's expansion and the way it disputed power and space with the central administration, without having it fully within its grasp. In the early years, caravans of explorers departed from São Paulo to the South, to fight the Jesuits and enslave the Indians, and to the North and center, in the search of gold and diamonds. Frontiers were expanded, settlements were created, and in the 18th century the Paulistas fought with the colonial administration, and lost, for the control of the gold region in Minas Gerais. While the colonial administration moved to Rio de Janeiro to better control the gold trade, São Paulo remained in isolation, only to pick up speed again with the introduction of coffee plantations in the mid 19th century. After 1850 slavery became a doomed institution, and the São Paulo planters started to bring immigrants from Italy, Germany, and eventually Japan¹². With capital generated by the plantations, and the entrepreneurial and working skills brought by the immigrants, São Paulo started to develop its industries. São Paulo political leadership played a central role in the overthrow of the centralized Imperial regime in 1889, and its replacement by a Republican federation controlled, for the first time in the country's history, by arrangements and negotiations among the regional oligarchies in São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Sul, and an increasingly strong and politicized army.

This oligarchical arrangement was probably the closest Brazil ever had of a contractual political regime. In 1930 centralization was reinstated, opening the way for ideologies of modernization, positivism, industrialization, nationalism, which developed amidst a realignment of the regional oligarchies which brought the civilian and military leadership in the South to Rio de Janeiro, and left São Paulo again in isolation. In 1932 São Paulo raised in arms against the central government - the last time the country had anything approaching an internal civil war - and lost. The implications of São Paulo's defeat in 1932 have been compared with what would happen in the United States if the South had won the Civil War. In Brazil it did.

¹² See, for the way the manpower problem was handled by the paulista elite, and its long-term political implications, Elisa P. Reis, *The Agrarian Roots of Authoritarian Modernization in Brazil*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Political Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1979.

7. Conservative modernization

Historical details should not detract us from the main conceptual point in this analysis, which the split between politics and the economy. Political and economic modernization in Brazil, which started in earnest in the 1930's, was carried on against and in opposition to the country's most dynamic economic center, São Paulo. This generalization can be qualified in many ways. Armed confrontation in 1932 gave way to reconciliation in 1934, and again to hostility when Vargas assumed full authoritarian powers in 1937. There were, of course, different people and groups in São Paulo - coffee barons, small farmers, merchants, industrialists, bankers, urban workers, intellectuals - with their own interests and conflicts, and they all reacted somehow differently to the events. World depression in the 1930's reduced the value of coffee exports, but also intensified a drive towards import substitution that benefited mostly the São Paulo region. A series of governmental agencies were created to handle the economy, and here again the Paulista elite was often called to participate. Since industrialization and political centralization occurred at the same time, the 1930's have been considered by some authors as the years of the "Brazilian bourgeois revolution", a notion that concealed, more than it explained, the true meaning of what was actually going on.

In fact, the 1930's can be better understood as the period when Brazil intensified its pattern of *conservative modernization*. Modernization was present in the incorporation of modern administrative procedures, the modernization of the armed forces, the establishment of institutions for economic policy and planning, the creation of the beginnings of a welfare system for urban workers, the concern with industrialization, and the pervasiveness of positivist ideologies among political and military leaders, and in the elimination of the political power of the traditional state oligarchies. Conservatism was obvious in the repression to all kinds of autonomous social movements, in the creation of a trade-union system linked to government and based on corporatist notions, in the maintenance of the property rights of rural landowners, in the exclusion of the rural population from the benefits of social security, in the repression against leftist and liberal ideas and intellectuals, and in the clear ideological affinities between Brazilian political elites and the fascist ideologies in Europe; it was also manifest on the way an authoritarian educational system was imposed from above, education of the children of

immigrants in their mother tongue forbidden, and attempts to create institutions of higher learning outside the government's control resisted and suppressed¹³.

The political backbone of conservative modernization was neopatrimonialism and its political component, cooptation. Neopatrimonialism was present along two distinct but complementary aspects. As the federal system increased its size and ability to reach all aspects of the country's life, and in the absence of a truly system of political representation, political life (meaning the appointment to a public office) became a goal in itself, not only as a source of social prestige and employment, but also, or perhaps mainly, because of the opportunities it provided to increase one's personal fortunes and to carry public funds and employment opportunities to one's friends, relatives and towns. From an economic point of view, the distinctive trait of neopatrimonialism is neomercantilism. Like in classic mercantilism, the State gets involved in all kinds of economic activities, creates its own banks, industries, trade companies, and so forth. Sometimes this is done directly through public companies; very often, however, these protected activities are carried on through privileged national and international groups, which establish alliances based on shared interests with bureaucrats and politicians. In this way, opportunities were created for a new type of economic entrepreneur, involved in the setting up of all kinds of business and industrial enterprises, from foreign trade to mining, from the production of weapons to the production of sugar, all of them deeply dependent on public favor, concessions, authorizations, exemptions and monopolies to survive and prosper. There was of course a continuum, without clearly dividing lines, going from a Paulista entrepreneur who looked eventually for financial help or a special favor for his company to a politician who established a private company to sell services or products to his own, or his friend's, office; but neomercantilist arrangements certainly prevailed.

Political and administrative cooptation was not limited to businessmen and politicians. It reached intellectuals, seduced by a modernizing state that contracted for large projects of architecture, tried to develop a nationwide education system and opened a space for

¹³ See, on ideologies and education, S. Schwartzman, Helena M. Bomeny and Vanda M. Costa, *Tempos de Capanema*, Rio de Janeiro, Editora Paz e Terra, e São Paulo, Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1984.

sociological studies on the true nature of the Brazilian population, away from the fantasies and formalities of juridical abstractions.

The main point to be stressed in this analysis is the tension between the different modes, or "languages" of doing politics that coexisted in such a context¹⁴. The combination of a strong neopatrimonialist state and economically depressed regions led to a pattern of political interaction dominated by a continuous bargaining between the state and all kinds of social groups for their relative access to the privileges and benefits controlled by the state. It was not a bargaining among equals. More active leadership would be coopted by the state with concessions and privileges, and placed at its service. If this was impossible, repression ensued. The Brazilian state was usually permissive, and open to the incorporation of intellectuals, entrepreneurs, religious and labor leaders, if they were willing to compromise. Institutionalized cooptation tends to lead to corporatist arrangements, through which interest groups are organized in institutions under the scrutiny and supervision of the state bureaucracy. The corporatist model was actually used extensively in Brazil after 1930, in an effort to control and coopt all the emerging sectors in a modernizing country -- union leaders, businessmen, the liberal professions, the universities and other educational institutions. When, after 1945, elections had to be held in a relatively open democratic regime, cooptation and corporatism provided the basis of an extensive system of political clientelism and patronage, which was able to maintain some kind of political stability for a fairly long period.

The competing language is that of political representation. It assumes a much stronger role for "civil society" -- bourgeois groups, trade unions, interest groups, religious and regional entities, linguistic and national minorities -- and a correspondingly weaker and dependent role for parties and governmental institutions. These different "languages" are not just alternative ways of saying the same things, and the differences can be seen when we consider how political parties are organized and behave under either of them. When political cooptation prevails, political parties are entities controlled and managed by the

¹⁴ For the concept of "political languages", and a broader typology, cf. Edson O. Nunes, *Clientelism and Bureaucratic Insulation: Uneven State Building and the Taming of Modernity in Contemporary Brazil*, University of California, Department of Political Science, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1984.

state as a power instrument among others. In extreme cases -- like in the Soviet Union or Mexico -- there is hardly any boundaries between the parties and the state bureaucracy. Elections, in such a system, are little more than periodical rituals of political legitimation. On the other extreme, when representation prevails, it is fairly easy to translate the different political parties into their constitute groups. In this case, parties will tend to have a more or less clear ideological or social identity, and will perform more closely, as it was expected in functional (and also Marxist) theory, the functions of interest representation and aggregation.

Real life lies usually between these two extremes. No state lasts only through repression or cooptation, and no political representation gets established without creating a relatively independent sphere of autonomy and self-determination for power holders. Political parties not only create their own oligarchies, a la Michels, but also their own ladders of social prestige and mobility, independent, in many ways, both from the class systems and from the State. The consequence is the development of a specifically political space (a space for "politics" as such), open in varying degrees to different kinds of political entrepreneurship¹⁵. Sometimes the political man finds his space as a broker between the State and civil society, whose services are particularly appreciated in periods of electoral politics. Sometimes -- as it seems to have happened in São Paulo -- the better-organized interest groups are able to relate directly to the state agencies and institutions, and lose interest in the formalities of political life and their corresponding institutions -- legislative bodies, local government agencies, and so forth. Once emptied of its representational function, and regarded by elite groups as an undignified and not very rewarding kind of activity, politics becomes the natural breeding ground for populism. As the Brazilian electoral system started to function in earnest after 1945, populism increased its weight, first in São Paulo, then in Rio de Janeiro, and finally overshadowed both the traditional system of political cooptation set up by the State and the traditional

¹⁵ This differentiated role of political parties was spelled out long ago by Max Weber in his text on "Class, Status and Power", published in the United States by H. Gerth and C. W. Mills. However, it does not seem to have penetrated the American thinking on the matter, probably because it run against the conventional "representation" language current in Western political science. Cf. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, 1967.

oligarchies, and the meager attempts at political representation in São Paulo and other urban and industrialized areas. The landslide in the presidential election of 1960 by populist leader Jânio Quadros was its peak, and also the beginning of the end for the democratic experience started fifteen years earlier.

8. Social ethics and values.

The discussion so far should suffice to dispel the notion that the state is everything, and society nothing. When the weight is strongly tilted towards the State, however, there are some clearly observable effects on the way society works. In the Brazilian experience, it is quite clear many significant changes in society since the early 19th Century were not determined and cannot be properly understood through what went on at the State, or at the political level. The country went from slavery to free labor, suffered a dramatic process of demographic dislocation and immigration, and developed a sizeable industrial sector in the center-south. None of these major transformations could be explained by intentional policy decisions, although they all had, of course, political implications and consequences. We can say, nevertheless, that Brazilian society is usually very dependent on the State for all kinds of authorizations - benefits, sinecures, employments, regulations, subsidies, exemptions and so forth. The other side of dependency is clandestinity. Since the State wants to control everything (without, however, being able to do it), non-regulated behavior come to be perceived as illegitimate, but at the same time accepted in a tacit and consensual form. Examples are all manifestations of "informal" economy, popular forms of illegal gambling, popular religions, tax evasion, smuggling, white collar delinquency different manifestations of private power and vendettas, and family systems established outside the conventional norms and established morality. The consequence is that daily life becomes often emptied of ethical and normative contents, a condition of social anomie that was still not been fully understood by sociologists or anthropologists.

The Catholic Church is a good illustration of these interactions between State and society. What is the Church, State or society? In the Portuguese tradition, which was carried out to Brazil, the Church is part of the State, performing the basic rituals of social life (baptism, marriage, burials, public festivities, education) and instilling norms of social

conformity, without mingling too much in questions of political power and public administration. The Brazilian political elite has always been rationalist, freemason and positivist, rather than Catholic, and whenever the Church tried to extend its power and influence beyond its assigned roles -- like during the so-called "Religious Question" in the late 19th Century -- the civilian authorities reacted with energy¹⁶.

After 1920 the Brazilian Catholic Church tried, for the first time, to organize itself as an autonomous social and intellectual movement, and to have a political influence based on its social strength, rather than the other way round. In 1934, however, a political pact between the Church hierarchy and the Vargas regime actually reestablished the formal links between State and Church that had been severed in the Republican constitution of 1889, and the Church was for all purposes coopted again at the State's service¹⁷. One of Church's main political banners, private education, was taken away when the government granted it the control of the Ministry of Education, and allowed for religious teaching in public schools. The semi-official, but subordinate role of the Catholic Church in Brazilian society is one the main reasons for the ritualism and lack of conviction which characterizes traditional Catholicism in Brazil, in contrast with the intensity of more spontaneous and "clandestine" forms of popular religiosity. The rediscovery of society gives new breath to Brazilian militant Catholicism in the 1960's, which continues with the Church's involvement with the issues of human rights during the military regime, and is strengthened with the growing commitment of large sectors of the Brazilian Catholic hierarchy with grass-roots organizations and movements in the peripheries of large cities and in the countryside. One of the main aspects of this rediscovery of society is the effort

¹⁶ The question, which pitted the Imperial government against two bishops, was about the bishops' right to expel members of religious brotherhoods known to be freemasons. The government's stand was the brotherhoods were not purely religious, and the Church should therefore bow to the civilian government in the matter. The Bishops resisted, and were jailed for refusing to accept the civilian authority.

¹⁷ This notion of the Church as a relatively subordinate force in Brazilian society, and this interpretation of the political pact between State and Church during the Vargas period, are at deviance with the traditional views on these questions in Brazilian historiography. See S. Schwartzman, Helena M. Bomeny and Vanda M. Costa, op. cit.; and S. Schwartzman, Simon, "A Política da Igreja e a Educação: o Sentido de um Pacto", *Religião e Sociedade* (Rio de Janeiro) 13, 1 (March), 108-127.

to provide social and community life with an ethical and moral content of its own, which was impossible to convey when the Church was identified with the established political order. The achievements, difficulties and internal conflicts experienced by the Church through this process reflect, in a large extent, the broader problems of overcoming an authoritarian and hierarchical political order and establishing new forms of social organization and participation.

9. Post-war developments.

We have so far described, in very broad terms, the concepts that help us to visualize the Brazilian alternative road to modernity until the War years. Speed increases dramatically after 1945, as witnessed by the demographic changes (from about 40 million in 1940 to 140 million today), urbanization (about 70% of the population in urban centers today) and the creation of large metropolitan areas in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre, and Recife, Salvador. The more traditional and decadent forms of economic organization, with its vicious combination of large, unproductive land properties and an impoverished peasantry loses weight towards extensively mechanized cash crops, sugar cane and alcohol agro-industries, large, unpopulated land extensions set apart for cattle raising and other forms of modern agriculture geared to the internal or international markets. The old system of sharecropping and absentee landlords is in large part replaced by rural entrepreneurs and a rural proletariat, and excessive manpower is expelled to the urban peripheries. This is a intense and violent transformation, accompanied by the destruction of traditional ways of life and conflicts for access to the land, which is still going on. However, it is possible to say that the problems Brazil faces today are much less related to what happens in the countryside than with what happens in the cities. The demographic emptying of the countryside and its rapid modernization allows for the creation of rural unions and the introduction of social welfare in the countryside, and gradually the sharp differences between country and town that have always prevailed in Brazil begin to disappear.

The other side to the emptying of the countryside is the swelling of the cities. The presence of "dangerous classes", large sectors of the urban population living with

extremely high levels of daily violence and threatening the physical security of the high and middle sectors, is not a novelty in Brazil. In fact, these "dangerous classes" have always existed in Rio de Janeiro and other urban centers, and are a permanent feature of a society based on the dominance of administrative and political centers devoid of an adequate structure of industrial employment. The demographic movements of the post-war period, however, make this reality much more evident, and stimulate the emergence of a host of "clandestine" organizations in the cities, going from "political machines" to samba schools, from football clubs to the organized crime, with very blurred frontiers among each other.

The middle classes also grow, looking for income and social security in public employment or in the liberal professions, or in the commercial and industrial opportunities that emerge in the large urban centers. They force the expansion of middle and higher education is provided first by the public sector, and later by the private initiative, while basic education lags behind. While the administrative and political centers growth through middle-class employment, the expansion of services and the swelling of their impoverished peripheries, São Paulo grows mostly through industrialization, and is therefore better able to absorb its growing population into productive activities. An image of "two Brazils" has been traditionally used to describe the contrasts between the modern cities and the traditional and impoverished countryside; today, it is a better description of the two types of industrialization and modernization that places São Paulo and its surrounding region against most of the rest.

10. Towards Convergence?

Social transformations of such an intensity could not fail to shake the bonds of symbiosis and dependency that have been established through the years between the Brazilian state and most of its civil society. Brazil's history in the last twenty or thirty years can be broadly described as a strong, and so far unsuccessful, effort to cope with the problems and tensions derived from its drive to modernity, sometimes trying to incorporate features which are typical of Western democracies, sometimes falling back into the patterns of conservative modernization and political authoritarianism which are more keen to its past experiences. One should ask, at this point, whether societies that started from so different

pasts are bound to converge at the same place. Is there a tendency for modern societies to develop similar institutions? Are the problems of modernity such that require a similar set of institutional arrangements to cope with them, or, on the contrary, can we expect a tendency towards divergent roads and an increase, rather than decrease, of international differentiation?

The answer to this question depends on how much similarity one would expect to confirm the hypothesis of convergence, and on whether we are trying to be predictive or normative. There are enough differences among the advanced industrial societies of today - the United States, Japan, West Europe, the Soviet Union, East Europe - to warn us that convergence has its limits. And yet, all these societies not only share some features like an educated population and similar patterns of industrial and administrative organization, but there are also signs of convergence in the way the economic system is organized, and in the establishment of pluralist political systems¹⁸. One could say, in short (and risking all the sins of sweeping generalizations), that no society can cope with the problems and tensions of modernity without institutional arrangements allowing for mass education, technical competence, the development of individual creativity and initiative, the coexistence of dissent and the global management of the environment, scarce resources and public goods. This does not mean, of course, that all societies will develop these institutions, nor that they will be equally able to confront the problems of modernity, and post-modernity, with equal success.

We can conclude by examining, very briefly, how Brazil had tried to cope with the problems of transition. When the military took power in 1964 they brought with them the theories of economic liberalism, and the notion that the state had to reduce its weight and its attempts to control the economy. Economic liberalism, however, did not last more

¹⁸ A thesis of convergence in the industrial systems of Western capitalist societies (without, however, using this term) can be found in Michael J. Piore and Charles F. Sabel, op. cit. For an earlier emphasis on the contrasts, cf. Reinhard Bendix, *Work and Authority in Industry*, 1956. Perestroika and transformations in China have helped to bring back the thesis of economic and even political convergence between East and West, which became fashionable for some years after Stalin, and then seemed to have waned away.

than a few years¹⁹, and the patrimonial nature of the state bureaucracy was barely touched except in a few sectors like tax collection or internal security. In the seventies, the drive for economic and industrial development through state intervention and central planning was in full swing; in the meantime, the government's efforts to assure some basis of political support in the population were carried on through the use of the more traditional mechanisms of political cooptation and clientelism. As the economic expansion of the 1970's came to its limits, and a civilian regime was reinstated, the public sector was much bigger, more inefficient and unable to control its expenses than ever before. This combination of an inflated and expensive public sector, which still polarizes all the attention and pressures of all sides, but which is, however unable to articulate long-term policies in a context of economic duress, is certainly the main predicament Brazil faces today.

In politics, the country is now in its second attempt since 1945 to establish a modern party system based on the classic assumptions of political representation. The first attempt, which lasted from 1945 to 1964, was in fact sustained by political parties that inherited the clientelistic mechanisms established by the authoritarian "Estado Novo" until 1945, and collapsed with the uncontrolled expansion of populism after 1960. The second experience, started in 1985 after twenty years of military regime, has been characterized by the resurgence of political clientelism as the dominant factor in the electoral process, without, however, the command of any kind of well identified political center. The consequence has been the political weakness of the Executive, the constant deadlock in the legislative, and the resurgence of populism, on one side, and the ghost of military intervention, on the other, as real threats to the new democratic regime. The political problem in Brazil today is how to provide the country with a party system which

¹⁹ In Latin America, economic liberalism came always accompanied by political authoritarianism, among other things because it required the forced elimination of "artificial" privileges and "obsolete" economic organizations, with the consequent effects of unemployment and social unrest. This program was carried on to its utmost consequence in Chile, as witnessed both by the highly repressive nature of the Pinochet regime and by its apparent economic achievements in the recent years. By comparison, political repression in Brazil was less extended and short-lived, and economic liberalism lasted even less.

can be perceived as minimally representative of stable political majorities, and which could provide support for a relatively stable and active civilian authority. The introduction of a parliamentary system, with the end of American-type presidentialism, and eventual changes in the mechanisms of electoral representation and party formation and electoral practices, are now being discussed as possible means to these ends. It is not clear, however, that these measures will actually be adopted, and even less so that they will bring the expected results.

One could argue that these efforts towards political democracy are doomed to failure, given the country's past institutions, culture and traditions. The fact, however, is that the last twenty years of military regime have convinced most people that there are problems of ungovernability that affect not only weak democratic regimes, but also authoritarian systems closed to the influence of public opinion, the free press and organized political parties. Governability is not assured, however, through the simple formalities of representative democracy. To take up an old Tocquevillean thesis, the establishment of higher degrees of governability in a context of political legitimacy requires the development of a series of stable and self-centered institutions which can mediate between, on one hand, a volatile and shapeless public opinion and the groups and sectors geared to its manipulation, and, on the other, the State. These "intermediate institutions" are not likely to be formed, like they were long before in Europe, by the combination of regional, religious and class cleavages in society; they are more likely to emerge from a host of entities like professional and trade associations and unions, economic interest groups, political parties and movements, local associations, political parties; and also by professionalized, institutionalized and technically competent sectors of the State itself, in the judiciary, in different branches of the executive and even, perhaps, in the legislative bodies. One could expect these intermediate bodies to develop not from the good intentions of some people, but out of the sheer impossibility of a continuing pattern of dependency and subordination of all sectors towards a crisis-ridden neopatrimonial state. The final outcome of such a process is not likely to be a State controlled by "civil society", but a condition in which the traditional frontiers between "public" and "private", "state" and "society" will be altered, together with the concepts we use to describe them.